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A
S E R M O N

Preached at the
ANNIVERSARY MEETING
OF THE
SONS of the CLERGY,
IN THE
Cathedral of St. PAUL, LONDON,
On THURSDAY, MAY 16, 1771.

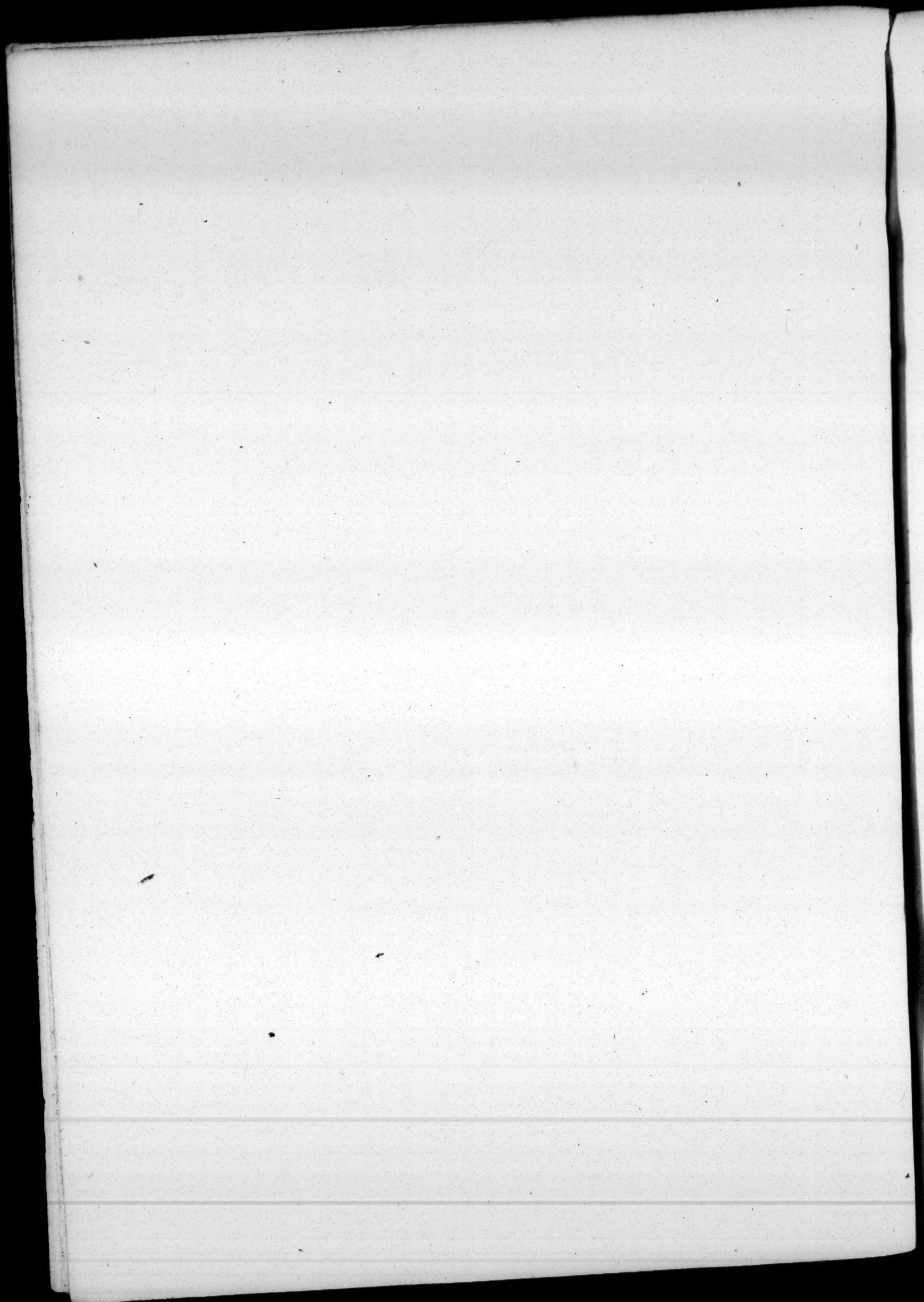
By WILLIAM PARKER, D.D.
RECTOR of St. JAMES's, Westminster, CHAPLAIN
in Ordinary to his MAJESTY, and F. R. S.

Published at the Request of the STEWARDS.

To which is added,
A LIST of the several Amounts arising from the COLLEC-
TIONS made at the ANNIVERSARY MEETING of the SONS of
the CLERGY, since the Year 1721.

L O N D O N :

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T O

His Grace the Duke of GRAFTON,
The Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of CARLISLE,
The Hon. and Rev. JAMES CORNWALLIS, M. A.
Sir WATKIN WILLIAMS WYNN, Bart.
RICHARD PEERS, Esq; and Alderman,
Mr. Serjeant JEPHSON,
The Rev. JOHN BLAIR, LL. D.
The Rev. THOMAS TOWNSON, B. D.
The Rev. DAVID HORNE, M. A.
GRANADO PIGOT, Esq;
PETER LEHEUP, junior, Esq;

S T E W A R D S

At the late Feast of the SONS of the CLERGY,

T H I S

D I S C O U R S E

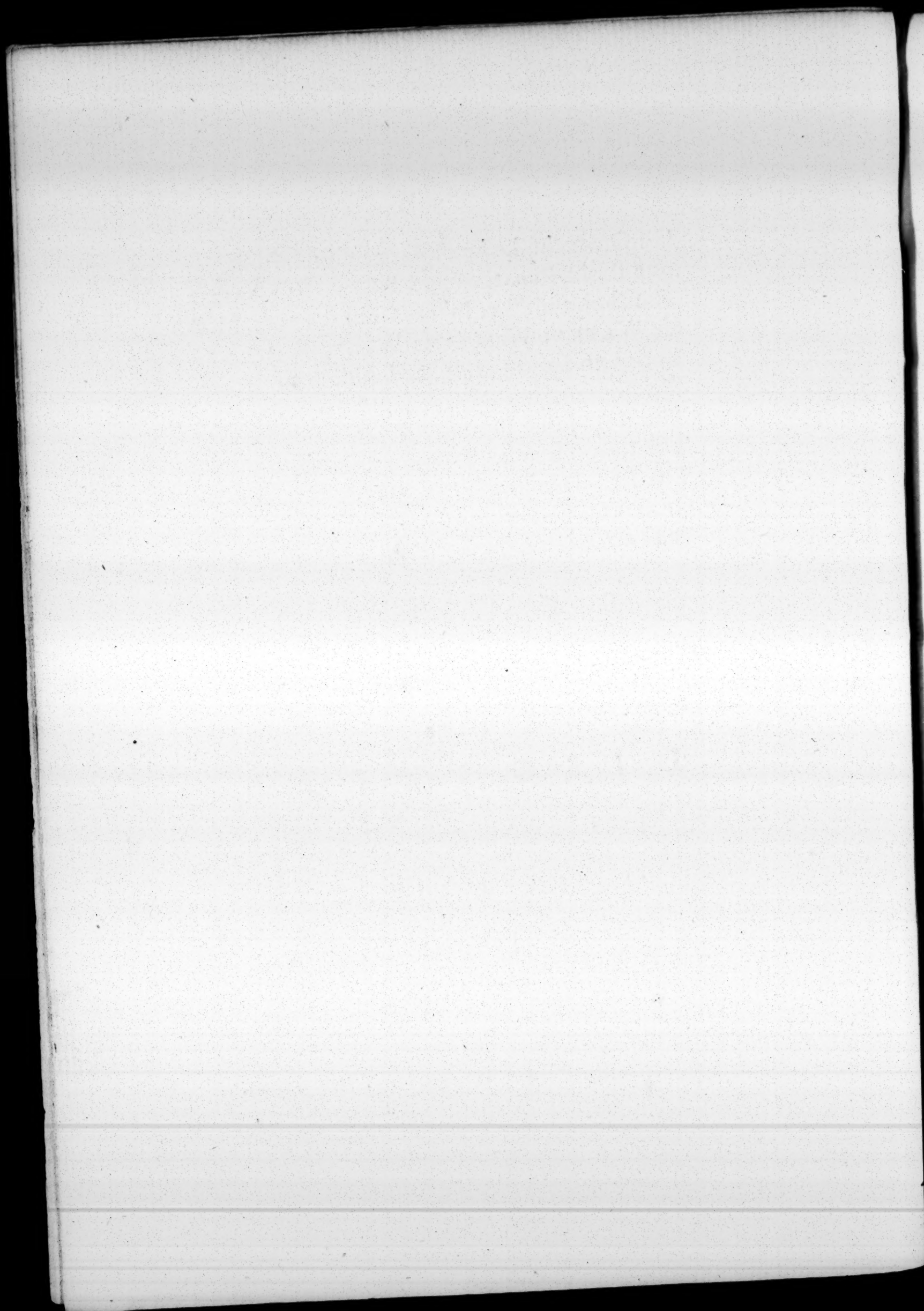
Is, with the greatest Respect,

I N S C R I B E D,

By their most obedient,

Humble Servant,

WILLIAM PARKER.





2 COR. viii. 3.

*For to their power, I bear record, yea,
and beyond their power, they were
willing of themselves.*



WE are met together this day in support of a most equitable and laudable charity; which comes recommended to us by the approbation of years. This is properly a festival of love; an assembly met together to join in praise of their universal Creator and Benefactor; and afterwards to prove their gratitude by dispensing his bounties as faithful stewards among his creatures,* the children of those who have preached his laws. That the satisfaction herein might be heightened, the affections animated, and the countenance of charity cheered

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and enlivened, it was fitting, that this feast of love should be united with the voice of harmony.

A parallel drawn between the state and disposition of christians in the ancient church of Macedonia, and the parents of those, in whose behalf this solemnity is instituted, may afford some motives to the exertion of love in their favour. These are naturally suggested by the text, in connexion with the adjoining verses. Arguments, which St. Paul made use of to excite an emulation in charity among his converts, the Corinthians, flourishing in a city of commerce and opulence; that they might not in benevolence, and the exercises of love, fall short of their poorer brethren in Macedonia.

“ Moreover, brethren,” saith he, “ we do you
“ to wit,” or we give you to understand, the
exceeding great, and very charitable contribu-
tion which is made in the churches of Macedo-
nia, being such as must denote an abundant
share of the grace of God exciting them: “ how
“ that under a great trial of affliction, and of
“ poverty, under which they labour, they have
“ notwithstanding, with great chearfulness and
“ joy of heart, made an ample collection to-
“ wards the relief of their poor brethren in Ju-
“ dea: so that their poverty hath abounded to
“ the

“ the riches of their liberality :” i. e. the contribution raised out of the penury of their circumstances hath demonstrated the riches of generosity existing in their hearts ; their benevolence having furnished a gift even more than adequate to their estate : for to their abilities, I bear them record, yea, and beyond their abilities, unsolicited by us, they were ready of themselves. So far from being intreated by us, they were spontaneous on the other hand, “ praying us “ with much intreaty, that we would receive “ the gift,” and take the charge of conveying and distributing their beneficence. And herein they exceeded even our hope : for considering the distresses they had to struggle with, we could not have expected so large a benefaction from them. But they first dedicated themselves and their abilities to the Lord and his service ; and then the contributions they had raised, to our disposal ; according to the good pleasure of his will, and as his wisdom should direct.

The same apostle bears honourable testimony to the liberality of the christians of Macedonia in more places than one. Thus their contribution to the poor saints at Jerusalem, is mentioned in his epistle to the Romans * ; and their generous supply to himself, in this second epistle

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to

* Rom. xv. 26.

4 A S E R M O N preached before
to the Corinthians *: “ that which was lacking
“ to me, the brethren which came from Mace-
“ donia supplied.”

The force of the apostle’s argument may be applied in different views; and incitements to emulation be drawn from thence by similarity of reasoning; whether we consider,

First, The state and condition of the beneficent, to whom the testimony is born; or

Secondly, The situation of the persons, to whom the address is made; or

Thirdly, The merits of compassion in the respective objects; or,

Fourthly and lastly, The gratitude we owe to the supreme Benefactor, the universal Parent, and our adopting Father in Christ Jesus, whether as christians, or as protestants.

The last of these arguments will excite us to join in the repeated voice of praise to him for the illumination of his gospel, and a subsequent reformation from error. We should certainly join our hands also in acts of gratitude, and demonstrations

* 2 Cor. xi. 9.

monstrations of love, in beneficence to his creatures: for there can be no gratitude to God, without benignity and charity to man. “ He
“ that loveth not his brother, whom he hath
“ seen, how can he love God, whom he hath
“ not seen?”

The apostle's exhortation to the Corinthians was, that they would not fall behind them of Macedonia.

First then with respect to the pattern set before you, my brethren, in the text; were the christians of Macedonia poor? So were the parents of these helpless children, for whom your charity is solicited this day. Were they converts to Christ? The parents of these have been something more. They have been ministers of Christ, to convert and reform others: nay, some of them may still be preachers of the gospel of Christ. Did those ancient christians, in the midst of their poverty, find room for liberality? The parents of some of these have grown poor by their liberality; sometimes perhaps by superabundant hospitality: chusing to offend rather on the side of excess, than of defect in generosity, and heart-felt joy of beneficence. For I may bear them record, that according to their power, yea, and beyond their power, to
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every act of bounty they have been chearfully disposed of themselves: ready upon every occasion, both by speech and hand, not only to promote, but spontaneously propose subscriptions to the relief of their christian brethren under any tribulation: warmed with a friendly zeal to every humane, beneficent purpose; to every good office towards mankind in general. Witness the constant attendance of many in this house, upon these publick days of kindness, whom we may remember in no very ample circumstances; who are now removed from your sight in the Lord, we trust, in better regions. Let us have an eye of regard to the desolate house, if any of their children shall be found therein in want of that bread back again, which the kind parent so freely gave. For such poverty, preceded at least, if not occasioned in part by such liberality, lays a kind of claim to compassion in behalf of her children, at the bar of every generous heart.

For, Secondly, Let us consider the circumstances of the persons, to whom the apostle's address was made: and here we shall find them bearing, in some respects, a near analogy to our own. For were they settled in a large, opulent, commercial city? So are the greatest part of you, my brethren; in a city far more opulent, and
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of more extensive commerce than that of Corinth. Give proof of your abundance! Give something of your affluence; that God may bless your pursuits, and crown the remainder of your substance with prosperity! For the parents of some of these have prayed for it. Spare something at least from luxury, to be bestowed in charity on the children of those, who have prayed for you, and for their country's welfare! Let not the poverty of the Macedonians put to shame the treasures of this great city!

The church of Rome hath of old been magnificent in her largesses of bounty to her clergy, even to an absurdity, and the prejudice of the publick. Let it not be the disgrace of protestants to fall short of Romanists in a case of commiseration so truly deplorable, in a matter of charity so highly equitable, as the present.

For, Thirdly, The objects, in whose behalf we plead, are most deserving of your benign regard. They are the children of those, who have laboured in the vineyard of our common Lord and Saviour; whose time hath been employed in turning many to righteousness, and confirming many in the way of happiness. They "gave themselves to the Lord" and his service; their hours and faculties have been exhausted
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in the duties of their vocation; they have gone about in the respective charges of their ministry upon earth doing good: compassion at least is due to their fatherless race; and so far “ their debtors we are.”

They are the children of those, who by their sacred profession were inhibited from following any lucrative employment: whose original patrimony was not improbably exhausted in their education for the sacred offices of their ministry: an education in these days become expensive. And consider how small oftentimes the return; how small the provision for the greatest part of the clergy of this kingdom! An unhappy error at the beginning of the reformation! But such is the case; and very piteous it is; and such as requires our generous commiseration and redress. What was not then foreseen in the law of government, remains now to be supplied by the law of kindness.

Consider the orphan left by his parent, who was once his guide! Heretofore a salutary guide to others; but now, alas, no longer a guide to him! to him, who was the nearest and dearest object of his domestic care! Consider the widow desolate, deprived of her soul's delight, and destitute of the hand, from whence her succour came!

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In some cases charity may be liable to imposition; but from the objects here petitioning, or rather humbly accepting your voluntary relief, there can be no suspicion of fraud; no jealousy of deception, nor any demerit in them: untainted innocence shutteth out fraud. Whatever the cause of their indigence may have been, these babes are harmless. Some of them born perhaps with a fair prospect of liberal education, in a degree of affluence: that education begun: and perhaps more than half perfected. But the root and the stem that nourished them received a sudden blight, and all the branches drooped.

If any should suggest in some case an ill-natured suspicion, that the parent in time of health was too profuse; "yet these lambs, what have they done?" To urge a particular instance of imprudence in domestick œconomy against a general good institution, would be, if not hard-hearted, at least very uncandid. The detriment of the indiscretion was to himself, and his own family: the generosity of heart was to the world around him: though small the sphere, to which it could be extended. Forgive him this error! Perhaps from the nature of his situation it was not easy to be avoided. For consider the state and circumstances of the clergy of this country!

Situated many of them in large towns, with a small pittance of stipend; and an heavy burthen of duty upon their hands: the common necessities of life advancing hastily in price, without any proportionate advance to their income. Where the poor are numerous; every one looking up to them, and asking of them an example of bounty; commanding their eye, and melting their heart: many ready to upbraid them with uncharitableness, if they do not even exceed their capacity in giving. A kind of dignity of character at the same time in their household to be kept up. I do not here mean to warrant, or to plead for profuseness. God knows, in too many cases there is little room for profusion! But in some cases and situations it may be difficult, I say, to draw the line. For in every rank they are expected to live according to their profession and promotion; to maintain a respect and reverence in their neighbourhood; to support a degree of hospitality; to set an example of liberality; even where they can very ill afford it, and are scanty even in the common requisites of life.

Think at the same time of the tender mother of a large family at home; whose all dependeth upon the slender thread of her husband's life; anxious for her circle of innocent babes around her,

her, that hang upon her knees for bread; and for the child that sucketh at her breast. Lo! by turns she "holdeth her hand to the distaff," to work cloathing for her children; though born perhaps to an easier prospect. Her labour ceaseth not when the night cometh: "her candle goeth not out by night: yea, she riseth while it is yet night, to provide meat for her household." The father beholdeth their want, and partaketh in her moan: he knoweth the precariousness of his own life, and its importance to them: yea he feeleth perhaps within himself the premature declines of nature; and hath inward forebodings of desolation hastily approaching in his house. He is taken from them: what he apprehended, cometh to pass: their indigence is confirmed: yea, it falleth heavily upon them. Instances of this kind there have been: instances have been known. Verily it is hard upon the sons of Levi, if neither by endowment, patrimony, nor by charity, there should be "any part or inheritance found for him among his brethren!"

The sentiments of gratitude inspired by the united praises of divine bounty, and enlivened by the breath of harmony, interfere fourthly and lastly, this day in their behalf, to prevent

such neglect, and to warm every generous breast. For that heart must be callously hardened indeed, which can never open itself to the claims of gratitude, to any feelings of compassion, or the powers of sympathetic harmony.

For the voice of music is the voice of nature; intended, as improved, to communicate our joys; to express our griefs; to pour forth all our complaints; to procure redress to our sorrows. Thus is it the voice of rejoicing, and the voice of mourning; the voice of supplication, and the voice of thanksgiving.

She can adapt herself to all conditions of life, and to all affections of the human soul. With the victorious she can triumph, and with the vanquished implore mercy. She can be great among the sons of pride; and with the lowly she is humble and meek. She can "rejoice with them that do rejoice; and weep with them that weep." She can "go to the house of feasting, or the house of mourning;" and render herself an acceptable companion in either: because she can be assistant in either; to enhance pleasure, or alleviate woe.

She is hereby calculated to promote mutual communications of good; to delight the humane in the dispensations of public bounty; to warm the cooler spirit; to urge forwards the gentler;
to

to soften the harder soul into kindness; and while she charms the ear, to insinuate, or force her way into the recesses and treasures of the heart *.

Thus is she fitted to join with christianity in her first law promulgated, that of universal humanity; which is the law of kindness; which is "peace on earth, and good-will among men."

And for the same reason hath she been applied in religious services; to exalt our admiration of divine excellencies, in order to exalt our praises; to humble man, in order that he may more effectually implore divine mercy; to magnify divine goodness, in order to increase our gratitude; to celebrate divine justice, in order to create a religious awe of the divine inspection. In pious symphony with the holy Psalmist "will I rejoice, O Lord, in giving thanks for the operations of thine hands, when my mouth praiseth thee with joyful lips." And in the plaintive notes of another inspired hymn, "when my heart is in heaviness I will complain: yea, unto God will I make my supplication: to the God of all mercy and of all comfort †."

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* See more upon this subject in my sermon before the three choirs of Gloucester, Worcester, and Hereford, in the year 1753.

† Psal. lxi. 6. lxxvii. 3.

The voice of nature, in short, is the voice inspired by the God of nature to communicate our sensations. It is thus intended in the animal world. As it is also ordained, and adapted in the moral, to plead for innocence; assisted by internal emotions of compassion; by the "yearnings of the bowels," and tender feelings of the heart, and intercessions of the spirit in "groanings which cannot be uttered."

Gratitude at the same time is urged as a motive to munificence by our blessed Lord himself. "Freely ye have received, saith he, freely give." As indebted for all that ye enjoy to the God of bounty, be ye also munificent in your disposal of his blessings to your fellow-creatures!

And let not those, whose sacred province it hath been by divine appointment to bless his people, be permitted to go out of life without any prospect of temporal blessing upon their children! As they have been to you spiritual parents in the Lord, so be ye to their children in return foster-parents upon earth! And let not the son of the prophet perish for want of a morsel of bread at thine hand!

Other channels of charity indeed of late years have arisen among us, which are not without their respective merit. And the fountain may not be sufficient for an ample and adequate supply

supply of them all. But permit not this to be dried up, or deprived of its salutary stream; which was the first institution of the kind, and as it were the parent of them all!

The chearfulness of the donor will add a merit to the gift: the proportion of the bounty will give a proportion to the reward. It was the praise of the Macedonians, that they were willing of themselves. The rule of acceptable giving is, that "nothing be done grudgingly as of necessity; for God loveth the chearful giver." The measure of the reward is, "he that soweth plenteously, shall reap also plenteously*." And the proportion is measured by the ability of the giver. The poor widow, who threw in her two mites, contributed more, saith our blessed Lord, "than they all who had cast into the treasury." Verily that which hath been done by some of the ministers of Christ upon such occasions as the present, almost similar to this of the widow, that which hath been done by some whose children afterwards have stood in need of relief from this institution, "may be told for a memorial of them."

But I am persuaded, I need say no more. For the praise of the Macedonians, my brethren, is already yours. The readiness wherewith, previous

* 2 Cor. ix. 6, 7.

vious to intreaty, you have convened together, seems to afford conspicuous proof of this. Your plentiful contribution will, I may venture to promise, confirm the benevolence of your intention. So that were St. Paul now writing, he might say of you, as he said of them, "I bear them record, that they were willing of themselves." And your zeal herein will provoke many to the same generosity of love.

Such competitions in goodness, and rivalry in bounty, will be honourable among men; praise-worthy among superior intelligences, whoever of them may be spectators of the conduct of this sublunary world; but principally, and above all, will be acceptable in the sight of God, the supreme inspector of human actions, the judge and rewarder of all.

One happiness we have; that defect in liberality to the necessitous is not one of the vices to be charged upon this age and country. And need enough have we indeed of that charity, "which shall cover the multitude of sins." Let not us of this assembly come behind our brethren in supporting the national character of beneficence!

May this day not be disappointed of its hope! May it bear ample testimony to the sincerity of your love! And to use the apostle's language,
confirm

the SONS of the CLERGY. 17

confirm the ground of "our boasting on your behalf!" May the harmony of notes which entertain your ears this day, dilate and fill the soul with moral harmony! May you study to imitate the goodness which in your choral hymns you praise! And so may we all join with one heart, and with one voice, in holy concert together with the joy of the widow and the orphan, that are relieved by you this day, in thanksgiving to God "for his unspeakable bounty!" Amen!

T H E E N D.

A LIST of the annual Amount of the CONTRIBUTIONS, commencing with that of 1721, in order to shew the gradual Increase and Decline of this CHARITY: Which it is humbly hoped may once more recover the Favour of PUBLIC, so as to answer the Wants of those, whom it was intended to relieve.

	l.	s.	d.		l.	s.	d.
1721 —	330	16	0	1747 —	1062	2	0
1722 —	328	16	0	1748 —	916	6	6
1723 —	382	6	0	1749 —	985	12	6
1724 —	566	10	0	1750 —	1134	14	0
1725 —	630	5	0	1751 —	1167	19	0
1726 —	575	4	0	1752 —	1101	18	6
1727 —	655	0	0	1753 —	1063	2	6
1728 —	579	17	9	1754 —	976	8	2
1729 —	523	6	11	1755 —	1096	3	6
1730 —	722	6	4	1756 —	973	18	3
1731 —	840	1	0	1757 —	912	7	6
1732 —	951	1	3	1758 —	1081	18	7
1733 —	909	6	0	1759 —	1163	9	9
1734 —	1000	3	0	1760 —	1122	8	9
1735 —	850	5	3	1761 —	1096	15	0
1736 —	837	7	0	1762 —	836	13	9
1737 —	856	9	7	1763 —	1224	14	0
1738 —	935	2	7	1764 —	1009	2	9
1739 —	912	11	3	1765 —	1207	11	10
1740 —	784	1	6	1766 —	1149	6	5
1741 —	834	2	0	1767 —	902	19	5
1742 —	866	6	2	1768 —	935	6	11
1743 —	819	0	0	1769 —	803	1	6
1744 —	848	16	9	1770 —	786	16	6
1745 —	1044	0	0	1771 —	956	8	0
1746 —	922	10	0				

The Corporation have for their Object, to afford some Relief to such of the Widows and Orphans of the Clergy as are left destitute: As to the Money collected on the present Occasion, it is all disposed of by the Stewards within the Year, in placing out the Children of poor Clergymen Apprentices: Whereby forty-nine were provided for in the Course of last Year.

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